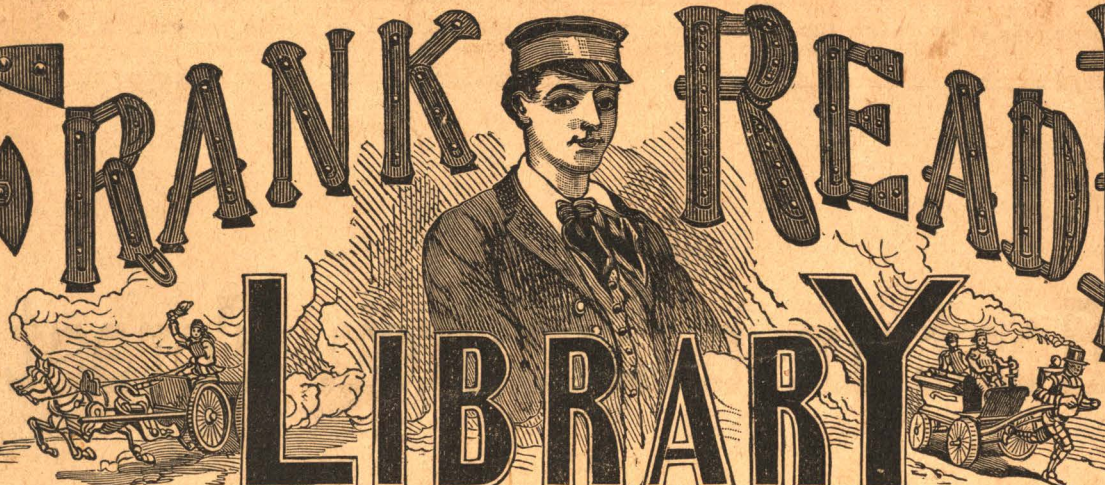


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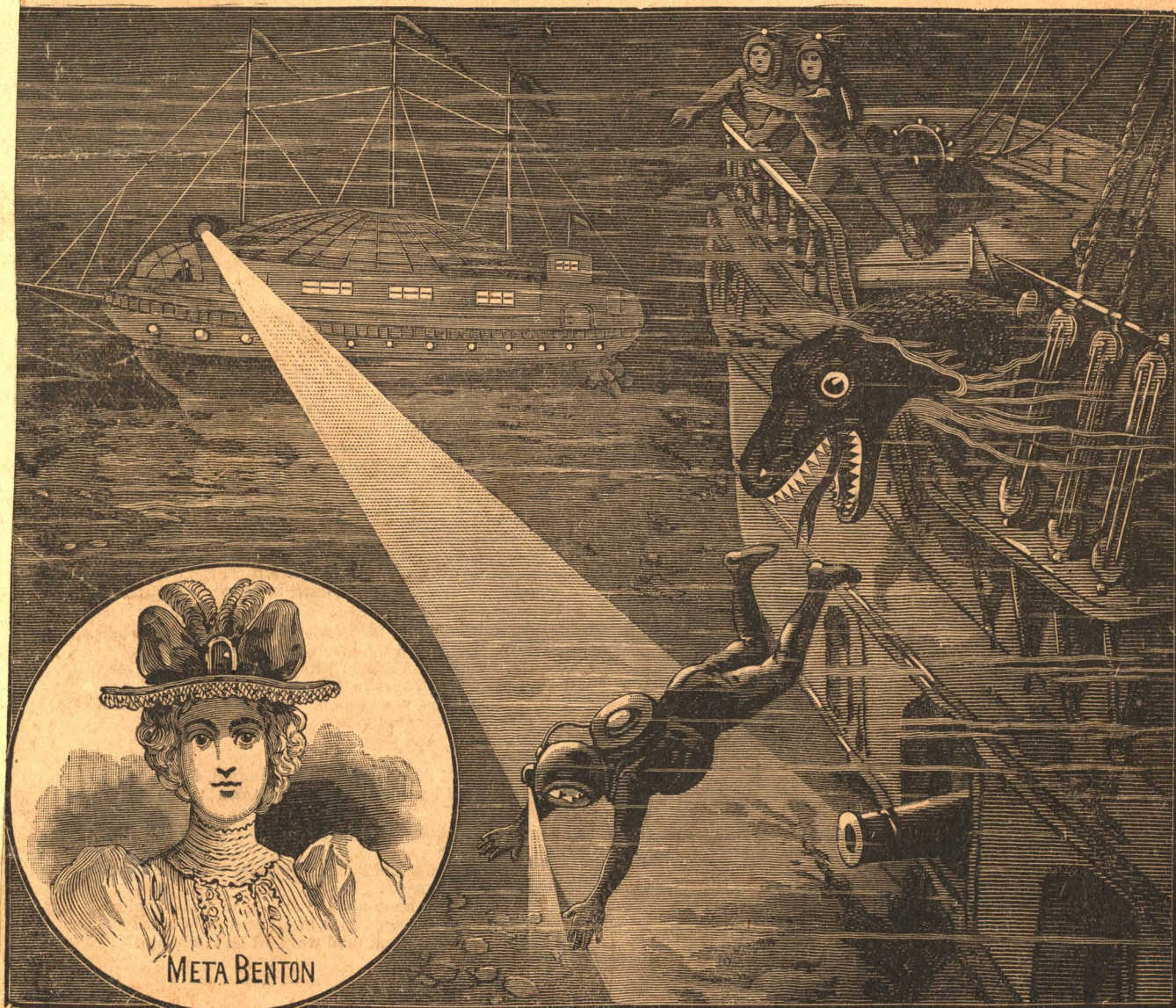
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A FLOAT IN A SUNKEN FOREST; or, With Frank Reade, Jr., on a Submarine Cruise.

By "NONAME."



META BENTON

A mighty serpent form hung in a sinuous length there, and a terrific mouth, with sharp and glittering teeth, was wide open and directed toward the Celt. Barney acted none too quick.

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Afloat in a Sunken Forest;

OR,

WITH FRANK READE, JR., ON A SUBMARINE CRUISE.

A WILD STORY OF THE DEEP SEA.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Latitude 90°," "Beyond the Gold Coast," "Six Sunken Pirates," "Lost in a Comet's Tail," "Astray in the Selvas; or, The Wild Experiences of Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp, in South America With the Electric Cab," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT LAND SINK.

UPON a certain morning in June, the Transatlantic Cable flashed a strange and startling report across the sea to the American terminus. The press of the country instantly issued special editions with a startling heading:

"Enormous Tidal Wave reported off the coast of Mozambique. Terrific Convulsions of Nature. Fifty square miles of country sink into the sea, carrying hundreds of human lives to an unknown depth. Terrible earthquake shocks felt all along the African coast. The wonder of a century. Six native villages and the city of Mendoka are fathoms deep in the great land sink. The valuable forests of dye woods, the property of American speculators, are covered to the depth of half a mile with water. The greatest earthly revulsion on record."

Thus, in substance, the report was given. It was a thrilling event. Not only were scientists, geographers and travelers interested in the affair, but the world at large.

To think that an area fifty miles square should be suddenly swallowed up by the sea, with its human population, habitations and all else, was a startling thing.

No such thing was on record since the fabled disappearance of the continent of Atlantis. It sounded veritably like a fable itself.

But there were many who knew that it was true. Every cablegram report only confirmed the story.

To be sure there were cases on record of small volcanic islands in the Pacific vanishing in a night, but that a generous slice of the coast of Africa should so singularly sink into the sea, was thrilling indeed.

Instinctively every one thought of their own land, and those in proximity to the sea could not help but reflect upon the possibility of such an occurrence on their own shores.

But among the terribly suspense stricken ones, were those who had friends or relatives in the distant African clime. To them the news came with a sickening fear.

Captain Jared Harding was a wealthy importer of mahogany and costly woods with an office in Pearl street, New York City.

One thousand acres owned by the firm of Harding & Co. were upon this sunken territory.

And in that very forest which the sea had reclaimed, the captain's only son, Walter Harding, was supposed to have been at work at the time of the culmination of the tidal wave.

The captain was in a fearful state of mind, and for a time there was extreme fear that he might lose his reason. He raved wildly over the fate of his beloved son, and declared his intention of going in quest of his body.

He changed his plan, however, upon the advice of friends, and

instead, offered an immense reward for the recovery of the body. But there was one person who positively refused to believe that Walter Harding was dead.

This was his sweetheart, Miss Meta Benton, who from the first confidently declared that her lover was alive, and would some day come home all right. Such is strength of woman's faith.

The reward offered by Mr. Harding attracted the attention of one person who at the present day occupies a unique and prominent position in the eyes of the world.

This individual was no other than a talented and famous young inventor named Frank Reade, Jr.

In his home in the lovely city of Readestown Frank Reade, Jr., had read of the whole affair with tingling veins and a thrill of sympathy.

"My soul, that is dreadful!" he declared. "I don't see how young Harding could escape death. The agonized father would no doubt be very glad to get even his body."

He was thoughtful for some moments, and then, as if talking to another person, went on:

"This matter should be of great interest to science. That a slice of the African coast should thus so strangely sink into the sea is certainly wonderful and perhaps significant as warning us of a series of changes possible in the terrestrial face of the globe. Ah!"

He gave a start just as there came a little rap on the door.

"Come in!" exclaimed the young inventor, without rising.

The door opened.

A curious looking old fellow with twinkling eyes and hair and beard of snow white stood on the threshold.

"Hello!" exclaimed Frank, with a pleasant ring in his voice, "it's my dear friend Dr. Vaneyke."

"At your service, young man," said the distinguished savant, with a low bow. "I am glad to find you well."

"Thank you! And yourself—"

"Quite well!"

"That is good! Just from the Smithsonian, I suppose?"

"Well, yes. I have come to Readestown to see you upon an important project."

"Always a project," laughed Frank. "What is it this time? Not a trip to Mars I hope?"

"Not while so much of interest confines me to this sphere," replied the Professor of Science.

He placed his tile upon a stand and then seated himself opposite Frank. There was a keen light in his eyes as he said:

"You have read of that tidal wave off Mozambique?"

Frank gave a start.

"So that's the lay!" he exclaimed. "Yes, I was much interested in it."

"I am glad of that. I have to say that I am also interested in it."

"That is good!"

"Only think! Vast fortunes were buried in that great sink."

"That is true," agreed Frank, "but I did not lose any there. Were you so unfortunate?"

"Not at all!" replied the doctor, wiping his specs, "but I am of the opinion that much can be found there of material value to science. That is if one could—er—could—well—"

"Well, what?"

"Proceed thither in the proper way and properly equipped."

"Ah! how would that be?"

"Under the sea with a submarine boat. I might as well come to the point, Frank. I hear that you have just completed your new craft."

"My submarine boat?" repeated Frank. "Yes, it is quite finished and ready for a cruise."

Dr. Vaneyke drew a deep breath.

"I thought so. Now—say the word, Frank."

"What?"

"Will you go to Mozambique with your submarine boat or not? Only think! Science will receive such a benefit as she never knew before, and you—well, there are treasures in the sunken forest which may belong to the man who can reclaim them."

The doctor eagerly placed a hand on Frank's knee. There was no doubt but that he was greatly in earnest. This pleased Frank much.

"What do I want of the treasures?" he asked, carelessly. "I am rich enough."

"But—they furnish motive. You are going to take a deep sea cruise anyway?"

"Yes, the Sea Crab is all equipped for that purpose."

"Then why not give ear to my prayer and make it a cruise to Mozambique. I am sure I will find a way to repay you," pleaded the doctor.

Before Frank could reply the door opened, and a comical looking red-haired Irishman stood on the threshold.

"Shure sor," he said, "it's a lady caller to see yez."

"Barney," began Frank, but before he could say more his fair visitor entered.

She was a young and slender girl, richly dressed, and in an apparent state of much distraction. Though she managed to smile and bow pleasantly to Frank and the doctor.

"Is this Mr. Reade?" she asked in a sweet voice.

"It is!" replied Frank.

"Are you the gentleman who is reported to have invented and built a submarine boat?"

Both Frank and the doctor gave a great stare of surprise.

"Yes!" replied Frank, wonderingly. "What can I do for you?"

"First I must tell you my name," she said, diffidently. "I am Meta Benton. The young man to whom I was engaged to be married, Mr. Walter Harding, was supposed to be in that forest when it sank beneath the waves."

"I have read that account," said Frank, pleasantly.

"Now, everybody believes that Walter lies dead somewhere in that sunken forest; at least everybody but me. I am sure that he is alive!"

Tears stood in the beautiful young girl's eyes, and her manner was very earnest. It could hardly have failed to touch a heart of stone.

"My dear young lady," said Frank, sympathetically, "I sincerely hope that you are right—and that he will yet come back to you."

But she shook her head sadly and said:

"Alas! I shall never see him again unless I can go to his rescue. My dreams have told me that."

Frank leaned forward.

"Where do you think that he is and what the manner of his escape?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I hardly know," she said half musingly. "Noble fellow! He would give his life freely to save others."

Then lifting her eyes she went on:

"But I am sure that he is alive and in need or help. I saw him in a dream. He was floating upon the broad surface of the sea, and clinging to the trunk of a tree. The mad waves were dashing him about with their fury, and I saw him reach a wild and forest grown shore. He crawled out upon the sands, only to be seized by fierce looking black men. They tied and carried him in a boat to a strange looking ship at anchor near. And there my dream stops. I know no more of him."

CHAPTER II.

THE SEA CRAB.

FRANK and the doctor had listened spellbound to the girl's impassioned story. It was plain that she was very earnest.

Her lovely eyes grew to a large size, and her face paled in the detail of her dream. When she finished she was weak and paler. She looked at Frank piteously, even imploringly. Her manner touched him.

"That is a wonderful vision, Miss Benton," he said softly. "I wish that it might come true."

"I feel that it is true," she said.

"It is possible. In what manner can I be of service to you?"

She bent forward with an eager light upon her face, and said tensely:

"Oh, you can help me to find him! You are a wonderful man! Anything is possible to you! Oh, from the bottom of my heart I pray you grant me your aid!"

Frank drew a deep breath. He glanced at the doctor and said: "You mean that you want me to go to Mozambique and try to find Mr. Harding."

"Yes, yes!" she said, earnestly. "Oh, can you grant my prayer? Do not refuse me!"

"Miss Benton," said Frank, seriously. "I will keep you in suspense no longer. It has been my intention from the first to go to the scene of the land sink with my submarine boat."

A great cry of joy burst from the young girl's lips.

"Oh, Heaven be praised!" she cried. "God will repay you. And you will start—at once!"

"At once!" replied Frank. "My dear friend here, Dr. Vaneyke, has already gained my promise to go thither with him."

"Oh, I forgot," cried the young girl, eagerly. "I must go with you. You will not refuse?"

Frank was astounded.

"What?" he exclaimed. "You do not mean that?"

"Indeed I do. And I know you will not refuse me. I am able to pay all expenses; any sum you may name, but let me go with you."

Frank looked at the doctor.

"It is rather an arduous undertaking for a young lady," ventured the savant.

"Oh, I shall never find fault with hardship," she cried. "I am strong and well. Only try me. You shall see what a traveler I am."

"Your friends—" began Frank.

"They can interpose no objection," she said, resolutely. "I am my own mistress."

"Well spoken!" said Dr. Vaneyke, with a laugh. "Young lady, I feel sure you will find your lover."

"That will rest with Heaven," she said, simply.

Frank drummed upon the table a few moments with his fingers, and finally said:

"Miss Benton, again I defer to you. You shall have your request. You may become one of our party."

"Oh, Heaven will bless you," she cried, joyfully. "I am sure now that Walter will be saved. But when shall we start? I can be ready in a few hours."

Frank smiled at her eagerness.

"We will leave here to-morrow afternoon at two," he said. "There will be five in our party. Two are not present, and are namely: Barney and Pomp, two faithful adherents of mine."

"I have heard much of them," she cried, delightedly. "Very well, Mr. Reade, I will be here to-morrow at two."

"Wait! Would you not like to go aboard the boat now and select your stateroom, as well as to see my new invention?"

"Oh, I would!" she cried, joyfully.

"And you, doctor—"

"Much pleased!"

Frank arose and led the way out of his office into the yard of the great machine works.

This was of great size, and protected from the street by a high brick wall in which were broad gates.

Workmen, artisans and mechanics were at work in various parts of the shops. These paid little heed to the party of three who passed through a high gate into an inner yard.

Here they came to a tank, or large basin of water, which covered fully half an acre in extent. At its lower end there was a water gate which Frank explained opened into a canal, and thence a half mile or more down to the river, which was navigable to the sea.

And in this tank floated the latest achievement of Frank Reade, Jr.'s wonderful brain.

The Sea Crab was truly a wonderful craft.

Certainly nothing like her sailed the seas in any part of the world. She presented quite an imposing appearance, floating there upon the water of the tank.

The doctor squinted at her through his eyeglasses and exclaimed:

"By Cicero, she is a wonder!"

As for Meta, she was quite speechless. But Frank led the way to a plank which extended to the submarine boat's deck.

"Come aboard," he said, "her interior is the wonderful part of her."

"Her exterior suits me," said the doctor. But they followed Frank across the plank.

The exterior of the Sea Crab, as the doctor signified, was well worth admiring.

The hull of the Crab was symmetrical in shape, having the lines of a torpedo boat. She rested upon the water a huge shell of aluminum, light and graceful, yet stanch and seaworthy.

A large dome-shaped roof with an immense skylight of plate glass rose from her main deck. Huge observation windows were upon either side of the vessel and all this made the main deck quite open while under water, so that the voyagers could see in all directions.

Back of this was a huge conning window over the stern, also a small observation tower.

Forward were the heavy plate glass windows of the pilot house.

Three small masts rose from the deck of the vessel, which, however, were not designed to carry sail. A search-light of enormous power occupied a place over the pilot house.

This is a meager description of the exterior appointments of the

submarine boat. Frank had led the way through a vestibule door into the cabin.

The main deck, under the dome-shaped skylight, was really a grand salon, with rare and costly appointments. It was fit for the abode of a prince.

Frank led the way from one richly furnished cabin and compartment to another. The doctor and Meta were charmed.

Meta selected a state-room about amidships, with a large observation window through which she could at all times watch the bed of the ocean.

"And at this window I am sure I shall spend the most of my time," she said.

The pilot-house was next visited and this was a place of interest.

Here were the electric key boards which regulated the mechanism and the machinery of the boat.

The Sea Crab was operated by means of powerful electric engines, propelled by a system of storage which was a secret of Frank's.

The method of sinking and raising the boat was by means of a large tank in the lower hold.

This was worked by means of pneumatic pressure. As the valves opened and admitted water instantly to the tank, the boat sank. It could be held in suspension if desired by regulating the quantity of water taken in.

To raise the boat it was necessary simply to exhaust this tank by means of pneumatic pressure.

The doctor was somewhat curious to know how the voyagers were supplied with air while under the water.

Frank pointed to numerous little valves which studded the cornices of the cabin.

"Do you see those?" he said; "they connect with a number of tubes through which fresh air is impelled constantly, thus keeping up a perpetual circulation. This air comes from the tank of a chemical generator, which has the faculty of manufacturing pure air and at the same time destroying all poisonous gases. Thus you see there is no danger of suffocation while under water."

"Wonderful!" cried the savant, "and you carry a large store of supplies aboard?"

"Enough for a year's cruise."

"I can see nothing to prevent your cruising around the world under water."

"There is nothing to prevent."

This explained the logical mechanism and appointments of the submarine boat quite clearly.

They did not overlook the minor departments, such as the armory where the weapons of all kinds were kept in stands, nor the cheery mess room and comfortable galley presided over by the darcy—Pomp.

When the doctor and Meta finished their inspection of the Sea Crab they were deeply impressed.

"The most wonderful invention of modern times!" declared the doctor.

"That is true," affirmed Meta.

"Well," said Frank, modestly, "one cannot construct one like it without having mastered two of my secrets."

"And they—"

"Are first, the chemical which is generated into pure oxygen; second, the system of electric storage by which the boat is impelled."

"Pshaw!" said the doctor. "Should any one guess the secrets and even equal your boat, you would have added another impossible and unrivaled—I might say inimitable invention—to your list before they could say Jack Robinson!"

Frank laughed.

"You give me too much credit, doctor," he said.

"Not a bit of it."

By this time they had reached the outer gate. The doctor gripped Frank's hand in parting, and Meta made a modest bow.

"Remember the Sea Crab will sail to-morrow at two," said Frank.

"We will be on hand."

"I expect there will be much excitement over the affair. Everybody is anxious to see the boat start. We shall proceed down the river to the ocean."

"And then—"

"Across the Atlantic to Tenerife, thence south to the Cape of Good Hope and northward to Mozambique and the sunken forest."

Then all bowed and in a few moments Frank was once more back in his office hard at work.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER WAY.

BARNEY and Pomp were two trusted adherents of the young inventor's.

One was an Irishman, fond of boasting of his Irish lineage; the other was a Georgian negro, fond of telling stories of 'possum hunts and watermelon parties.

They were the warmest of friends, though slightly addicted to the playing of practical jokes upon each other.

As soon as they heard of Frank's proposed trip to the sunken forest they were delighted.

"I see mighty glad ob it," declared the darcy. "Got drefful tired ob stayin' round home all de time. Wha' yo' say fo' yo'sef, I ish?"

"Begorra, I'm afther bein' glad mesilf," declared the Celt. "Shure, it's fond av wild adventure I am."

"Yah, yo' am a berry brave man yo' am, sah. I recklemember dat when Marse Frank took us lion huntin' in Africa. Aftah de lion roared once didn't see yo' no mo—he, he, he!"

"Phwat's that yez say, yez blackguard?" cried Barney, angrily. "Shure, yez don't mane to insult me?"

"I see jes' tellin' yo' a bit ob a story, dat am ah," said Pomp, suavely.

"Begorra, there's a heap av sarcasm in it, I'm thinkin', an' av yez don't be keerful, yez will git me rolled up."

Pomp sniffed contemptuously.

"Huh," he exclaimed; "yo' kain't scare dis chile one lily bit. If yo' wants to take excepshuns to mah remarks, yo' kin do so."

Barney glared at the darcy, and the latter returned the glare. For a moment they faced each other silently.

Then Barney spat on his hands, and Pomp shook his head like a mad bull.

"Look out fer yersilf, naygur!"

"Clar de track, chile!"

Then Barney made a biff at Pomp. The latter dodged, and lowering his head, made a rush at the Celt.

Barney dodged, and the darcy's head crashed against the brick wall of the machine shop. It would have brained a white man.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the Celt, taking the black man in the ribs. "Yez got left that toime!"

"Ki yi!" snarled Pomp, and made another rush for the Celt. This time Barney was not quick enough.

The darcy's bullet head struck him in the abdomen with the force of a catapult.

"Ouch! Murther!" yelled the Celt, and down he went.

The coon went over him and then they grappled. A lively wrestle followed. It was nip and tuck for awhile.

It was hard to say which really held the advantage, or how the contest would have terminated had it been allowed to go on.

But at that moment a bell clanged and workmen began to pour out of the shops.

In a moment the two jokers were upon their feet.

"Golly! I done fo'got all 'bout Marse Frank's ordahs fo' to put dot case ob goods ab'ord de Sea Crab," cried Pomp, in dismay.

"Now yez are in fer it, naygur," taunted Barney.

"Kain't do it alone to sabe mah life," said the dismayed coon.

Barney threw a hand spring.

"Come on yez big lump av charcoal!" he cried. "Shure I'll return good fer evil an' help yez!"

"Clar' fo' goodness! Does yo' mean dat, chile?"

"Av coorse I does!"

"Den on mah wo'd yo' ain't so bad as yo' looks!"

Barney made a crack at his colleague for this ambiguous remark, but Pomp turned a flip-flap and dodged out of the way.

Away they went to do Frank's bidding. They found the young inventor abcard the Sea Crab busily engaged himself in making preparations.

Until a late hour that night all hands were busy getting the submarine boat ready for sea.

The next morning saw all in readiness. The hour for the start was not far distant.

In spite of the fact that but little time had elapsed since Frank's decision the news of the projected trip had gone forth like wildfire.

The newspapers seized it with avidity, and all over the country the report spread and was read with interest by everybody.

As a result trains brought an influx of curious people to Readestown to see the submarine boat make the start upon the wonderful voyage.

They lined the river banks and crowded about the machine works.

At the appointed hour, Dr. Vaneyke and Meta Benton were on hand. The young girl looked pale but resolute.

Frank escorted her to the vessel's deck. Then after a few preliminaries the tank gate was opened. Barney placed a finger on the keyboard and the boat ran out into the canal.

Down the river it glided.

As it came into view there, cheering thousands upon the banks made the air ring.

Frank acknowledged the reception by waving a flag from the deck. Then the Sea Crab started on her course down the river.

Soon Readestown was left far behind. The run to the sea was very quickly made.

In the waters of the Atlantic the voyagers felt that the undertaking was really begun.

"I hope we shall never regret it," said Frank.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the doctor, "have no fear of that."

"I owe to you, Mr. Reade, a debt which I can never fully repay," said Meta, sincerely.

"Not at all," said Frank, courteously; "be sure it gives me pleasure to have you as a passenger."

Land was soon out of sight.

The Sea Crab proved a fast sailer on the surface. Numerous vessels were met and some of them hailed.

"We shall make a quick run to the Azores," said Frank, "the vessel behaves well."

But the doctor pointed to the mackerel sky, saying:

"It looks as if we might have a bit of a blow soon."

"That will not affect us," declared Frank.

"Indeed! and why not?"

"You forget. This is a submarine boat. We can travel under water and avoid the storm."

"Why, of course!" admitted the savant. "Why did I not think of that. But will you not travel beneath the surface some anyway?"

"I am quite willing to make a test of the Sea Crab's powers in that line. What say you all if we take a little trip to the bottom right here!"

"Good!" cried the doctor.

"I should be delighted I am sure," said Meta.

"All right. Let us all repair to the cabin then," said Frank.

This request was complied with. Then Frank stepped into the pilot-house.

He touched an electric button which hermetically closed every door and window.

Then he pressed another which set the chemical oxygen generator at work. Next he pulled open a lever which connected with the mechanism of the tank in the hold.

The result was instant and startling.

The Sea Crab settled in the waves. Down she went with a plunge. The last the voyagers saw of the surface was some excited fishermen in a boat near who were waving their hands confident that the Sea Crab had foundered.

For an instant all was pitchy darkness. There was a falling, jolting sensation.

Then Frank pressed a valve upon which he already had a finger. The result was sublime.

In an instant the whole interior of the boat was ablaze with light. The waters were illumined for yards about, and a wonderful scene was revealed. Hosts of strange fish were scurrying here and there, evidently startled at the sudden appearance of this unknown monster.

Everybody was at the observation window, intent upon watching for the bottom.

This they were rapidly approaching, but yet it seemed a good while before it came into view.

A wonderful spectacle it was.

To attempt a description in minute detail would require a volume. There were forests of seaweed, coral caverns peopled with strange monsters, and long reaches of white sand strewn with shells.

Upon this sand Frank allowed the boat to descend. It rested gently upon the bed of the sea.

Then all proceeded to spend a long while taking in the wonders about them.

"Do you know how far we are from the surface?" asked Frank after a while.

"How far?" asked the doctor.

"Half a mile."

This announcement created a wild sensation. To think that they were a half mile below the surface of the sea was strange enough. It engendered a query as to whether they might ever see the surface again.

But Frank laughed at this.

"Why, of course," he declared, "I could reach the surface now in a few minutes if I desired. The boat would rise like a crab."

The lights of the boat were sufficient for a radius of some yards about.

But Frank was desirous of a more extended view, so he pressed the search-light lever.

This sent a pathway of radiance for several hundred yards through the water.

All proceeded to follow this pathway with their eyes.

Now the focus flashed over a dense growth of marine plants, and then rested upon a cliff or projection of rock rising from the sands.

Steadily Frank moved the focus along, until suddenly a startling object claimed the attention of all.

"A sunken ship!" cried the doctor.

It was truly the sunken hull of a large ship which lay there half buried in the sands.

It became an instant object of interest.

After a moment Frank said:

"It looks to me like a sunken warship. Would you like to go aboard of her?"

CHAPTER IV.

ABOARD A SUNKEN WAR-SHIP.

ALL turned in surprise at this announcement.

"Go aboard of her!" exclaimed Dr. Vaneyke; "do you mean that, Frank?"

"Why certainly," replied the young inventor.

It could be seen that he was really serious. So the doctor asked again:

"But—how would that be possible?"

"Easy enough!" said Frank. "We will simply drop down alongside of the hull and then I will show you how to go aboard!"

"I should be pleased to see how you are going to do it," said the doctor, half incredulously.

Frank stepped into the pilot-house, and pressing a lever, raised the boat a few feet from the bottom.

Then he propelled it slowly toward the hull.

Fairly alongside Frank let the Sea Crab rest on the bottom again. At this short range a good view of the sunken ship could be had.

It was seen that she was of the old corvette type, such as were used in Revolutionary days. For aught the submarine voyagers knew, she might be one of Paul Jones' famous vessels.

Her hull was rotten and half covered with clinging marine plants. Sand had drifted half up to her shattered ports, through which several rusty cannon yet gaped. Little was left of her masts and rigging. Dr. Vaneyke was much excited over the prospect of paying a visit aboard of her.

Yet he did not see how it could be possible to leave the Sea Crab. Frank assured him that it was not only possible, but an easy matter.

"Barney," said the young inventor, "bring up those cases of divers' suits from the hold."

"Divers' suits!" exclaimed the doctor. "Do you think it will be safe to venture out in a diving suit?"

"And why not?"

"The pressure—will it not crush us? You know this is a lower depth than any diver ever ventured."

"Pshaw!" said Frank. "You mean a pipe and line diver. My diving suits are not of that kind. The reason why a diver dependant upon a surface pump cannot go down deep is on account of the difficulty of driving sufficient air down to him to resist the pressure. But my diving suits are helmets merely with a heavy metal generator almost inexhaustible and capable of standing a hundred times the pressure of an ordinary diving suit."

The doctor was astonished.

"On my word!" he declared. "I see the point. It is the same method of furnishing air which you employ aboard this boat."

"Just so!"

"I am incredulous no longer. You are too deep for me, young man."

Barney now appeared with the cases containing the suits. These consisted as Frank declared simply of helmets and tank generators carried upon the shoulders.

Meta had been watching matters with deep interest.

"I wish that I were a man," she said, "I would go with you."

"I wish you were," said Frank, "but I fear it would be too rough an experience for you."

"I will content myself with guarding the boat until you return," she said with a smile.

"Very good," said Frank. "We will appoint you and Pomp as guardians. Barney, I think you may go with us."

"All roight, sor," cried the Celt, delightedly.

With which he proceeded to instantly don one of the diving suits.

Dr. Vaneyke followed his example, and Frank came next.

They stood thus equipped for the submarine excursion. But an interesting question now suggested itself to the doctor.

How were they to emerge from the cabin into the sea without letting a flood of water into the cabin?

Frank quickly settled this.

He opened a door into a vestibule. Into this all passed. Then he closed the door behind them hermetically.

The next thing was to touch a valve which instantly flooded the vestibule with water. Frank then opened an outer door and walked out on deck.

This was an ingenious method of leaving the boat while she was under water.

To return, the water was exhausted simply by means of a pneumatic pressure.

Certainly the submarine boat was a wonderful triumph of genius.

Upon the deck the three divers waited a moment to become accustomed to the motion of the sea.

Then Frank clambered over the rail and stood upon the white sands.

The others followed him and then they proceeded to make their way across to the sunken vessel.

From the observation window Meta and Pomp could watch them with ease.

It was an easy matter to walk right up the sandy slope to the open ports of the vessel. Frank pushed his way through one of these.

Upon each diver's helmet, there was a brilliant incandescent lamp, so that it was an easy matter to see their way in the vessel's interior.

They were evidently on the gun deck. It was a strange and motley scene which met their gaze.

Strewn upon every hand were the remains of the catastrophe which had overtaken the ship.

Scattered skeletons of the crew who died at their guns, heaps of cannon balls, pieces of rotted muskets, and rusty cutlasses.

Beside a heap of nondescript articles, all this was seen at the first glance.

Frank placed his helmet close to the doctor's, and shouted:

"Doubtless it was quite a battle."

"I should say so," agreed the savant. "The poor fellows went down true to their duty."

"Begorra," exclaimed Barney, "there was a heap av thim by the appearance."

"Yes," agreed the doctor, "but how are we to know their nationality? Can this have been an American vessel?"

"We will find it out," declared Frank. "Her name must be upon some part of the ship or her belongings."

"Just so," said Vaneyke. "Lead the way, Frank. We will follow."

Through the place they now slowly made their way. It was difficult to put a foot down anywhere without stepping on a skeleton.

Suddenly Frank paused before one of the cannon which lay upon its rotting trucks, dismounted by an enemy's shot.

He bent over the muzzle and rubbed away some of the rust and encrustations.

As he had fancied upon the upper surface of the gun he found a raised inscription. Thus it read:

"Number 14 Gun. H. M. Ship Hector, A. D. 1780."

"That tells the story," said Frank. "She was a British war frigate."

"You are right," cried Vaneyke, as he also traced the inscription.

"And she was a royal proud one in her day."

"But she met her match in some Yankee vessel."

"It could have been no other foe in these waters."

"No."

"Now if we only knew the name of the victorious ship we would have succeeded in gathering quite a valuable bit of history from the depths of the sea."

"I fear that will not be possible," said Frank. "You see she has laid so long under water that it would be difficult to find any part of her log, or any other record."

"I fear so," agreed the doctor; "however, we may make a bit of a search."

"Of course!"

They now made their way forward. In the bow of the ship was a large swivel gun. This was also dismounted.

There was nothing more to be gained in the exploration of the gun deck, so the party turned their footsteps downward into the hold.

The first cabin they entered was the main cabin. Here the scene was one of decay and showed that disorder and confusion had once reigned there.

The long dining or mess table of the officers was strewn with silver plate and broken glassware and china. There were shattered panels and splintered tables, showing that some of the enemy's cannon balls had entered this cabin.

Passing through this, the explorers now entered the captain's cabin, as was evidenced by the nautical instruments and stands of books.

These latter, however, were soaked to a pulp, and all traces of the printer's ink had long since vanished from them.

The same with all the ship's papers and log-book; so that no clew as to the nature of the Hector's cruise could be learned.

Down into the hold the quest continued. Here were the stores and supplies of the ship.

Here were casks of wine, no doubt well preserved, as if they had been safely stowed in a comfortable cellar.

"On my word," said Frank, "I've half a mind to transport one of these casks to the Sea Crab. Their age would make the wine par excellence."

"Indeed, I should be pleased to sample it," declared the doctor, "but it would be troublesome to get it there."

So the idea was abandoned.

But Barney, who had been doing a little exploring on his own account, now made a discovery.

He kicked at a huge chest which looked as if it might have once belonged to a seaman. The wood was so rotten that it gave way and the chest crumbled to pieces.

But from the receptacle there rushed a flood of round objects, some of them shiny yellow. In an instant the Celt saw that he had made a wonderful discovery.

It was a treasure chest. The round objects were coins of gold and silver.

They represented a large sum. Probably, fearing capture, the captain of the Hector had ordered its treasure concealed in the hold.

And there it had remained safely all these many years, beneath the surface of the sea.

CHAPTER V.

OFF THE COAST OF MOZAMBIQUE..

THERE it had remained securely enough. Only to be rediscovered by Barney O'Shea, the submarine voyager.

That the Hector's money represented a large sum, there was no doubt.

Frank and the doctor were quickly aiding Barney to sort the coins.

"On my honor," cried the doctor, "the Hector must have carried fully one hundred thousand dollars."

"No doubt of it," replied Frank, "but unfortunately the most of this money is silver."

"Well—what of that?"

"Silver is not so valuable as gold, of course. More than that, these silver coins are of very little value, for the action of time and water has so corroded them that they are good for little. The gold coins are all right."

This was found to be true.

But alas. The gold made a pitiable small heap beside the corroded silver.

However, the find was worth several thousand dollars, and Barney was well satisfied.

He had a leathern sack which he had brought for the purpose of securing pretty shells. Into this he placed the gold.

The frigate had been quite thoroughly explored now. The three divers found their way to the upper deck.

This was strewn with rotten wreckage and silt and seaweed.

The light of the submarine boat made all quite plain now.

Frank had suggested that they return to the Sea Crab, when a thrilling adventure befell them.

Barney was at the rail of the sunken vessel when he felt the commotion of the water over his head. Instinctively he glanced up and beheld an astounding spectacle.

A mighty serpent form hung in a sinuous length there, and a terrific mouth, with sharp and glittering teeth, was wide open and directed toward the Celt.

Barney acted none too quick.

"Mither presarve us!" he gasped, "the devil is afther me!"

He dropped over the rail head first and rolled down the sand heap into an open part of the vessel. This was the saving of his life.

The huge sea monster's jaws struck the rail of the vessel and crushed it. There was a terrific motion of the water and Dr. Vaneyke and Frank were swept from the vessel's deck.

They clutched each other as they went over the rail and Frank, with his helmet close to the doctor's, cried:

"On my word, doctor, we are lost if that creature gets his eyes on us!"

"Make for the Sea Crab!"

"But Barney—"

"I think he is in the ship and out of the creature's reach. Quick! we can rescue him later!"

Frank needed no further impulse. Both men made for the rail of the Sea Crab.

Over it they piled and into the vestibule. The next moment with helmets removed they were in the cabin.

They were met by Pomp and Meta much excited.

"Golly, Marse Frank!" cried the dorky. "Whar' am dat I'ishman!"

"Oh, I hope that awful monster did not get him!" cried Meta.

"No. We believe he is safe in the hold of the ship," cried Dr. Vaneyke; "but look out! Mercy on us, Frank! The creature is coming for the boat!"

The next moment there was a terrific shock, a rattle and crash and everyone was thrown down.

The sea monster had struck the boat full force. Only one thing saved the Sea Crab at that moment.

The shock threw open the tank lever. In an instant it was evacuated and the boat sprung upwards.

When the dazed and bruised voyagers recovered themselves, daylight was about them and they looked out upon the surface of the sea.

Pomp instantly sprung into the pilot-house and checked the speed of the boat.

"Fo' de lan's sake, Marse Frank!" he said, "somfin' heavy struck dis 'ere boat dat time."

"You are right," cried the doctor, "but we are not badly hurt."

"I am all right," said Meta, pluckily, "but what of Barney?"

All exchanged startled glances.

It was certainly a thrilling thing to think of that the brave Celt was at that moment half a mile below them at the bottom of the sea.

It was likely that he was all safe despite this fact, though there was the chance of falling at any moment into some deadly trap.

"Barney is in the sunken ship," said Vaneyke.

"We must go back after him," declared Frank.

"We shall risk another encounter with the sea monster."

"That matters not. It is our duty to go back!"

"Oh, certainly. I am not at all opposed to it," declared the doctor, "but can we successfully cope with the creature?"

"I shall try it," said Frank.

He stepped into the pilot-house and reversed the tank lever. Instantly the boat sank.

Down it went to the bottom of the sea again.

The search light was employed and again the sunken wreck was located.

But fortunately nothing was seen of the sea monster. It had evidently given up the battle and departed.

As the submarine boat approached the sunken wreck, a man was seen to emerge from one of the port holes and make excited gesticulations.

It was Barney beyond a doubt.

The Celt a moment later was clambering over the rail and soon was in the Sea Crab's cabin.

It was a fortunate escape for all, and Frank sent the boat once more to the surface.

"This is enough of deep sea exploring until we reach the Sunken Forest," he declared; "that must be the theater of our efforts hereafter."

This pleased Meta exceedingly and all were satisfied. So the Sea Crab kept on its surface course for many days.

It was a long trip across the broad Atlantic, past the Azores to Tenerife, and then down the African coast.

But time conquers all things, and eventually the Sea Crab reached the waters of the Cape of Good Hope.

All were now upon the *qui vive*, as it really seemed as if they had already reached the scene of action, though as a matter of fact Mozambique was yet a long ways off.

They were now in the course of many passing vessels, and these were of all nationalities. But the little submarine boat kept steadily on.

To dwell upon the incidents of the voyage would be tedious.

To be sure the weather was not at all times propitious. Sometimes they encountered gales and heavy seas.

But these hindered the Sea Crab but little, for Frank had but to send her a short distance below the surface to overcome any danger of hard usage.

After due time the little Sea Crab rounded the Cape and sped up Mozambique Channel.

The island of Madagascar was upon one side, and the continent of Africa on the other. They were now drawing rapidly nearer to the scene of the great sink.

One day Frank came on deck with a glass and said:

"We are not ten miles from our destination."

A sharp cry broke from Meta's lips.

"Oh, can it be true?" she cried; "that is joyful news to me!"

"Take a look yonder," said Frank handing her the glass. "And you can see the coast of Mozambique. We are now standing in towards it."

Meta complied and her face alternately flushed and paled.

"My dream!" she murmured. "Oh, if it should come true!"

Nearer the Sea Crab drew to the ragged coast line. At that moment they were above the sunken forest.

It was Frank's purpose to run in as far as the shore and then endeavor to learn if possible if Walter Harding was among any survivors to be found there.

This was in deference to Meta, who was all anticipation and eagerness.

He had secretly no hope at all of finding Harding alive, but said quietly to the doctor:

"She must be satisfied first. Then we will undertake to explore the Sunken Forest."

"All right, Frank," agreed the savant. "I am quite agreeable."

So the Sea Crab made for the coast of Mozambique. A curious scene was there witnessed.

Where the verge of the big sink was there were great quantities of drift, of fallen trees, great cliffs cut in twain by the action of the water and all the appearances incidental to a vast tidal wave.

"By Cicero!" exclaimed Vaneyke, "that revulsion of Nature's forces kicked up muss enough, didn't it? The coast looks as if a cyclone had swept it."

"You are right," agreed Frank, "but the action of the sea will soon remove those traces. All will be a gravelly beach and breakers as before."

"And future generations may forget that there was ever a slice of the African continent reclaimed by the sea at this point."

"Just so!"

The submarine boat coasted along the shore for some miles. Meta was on deck with a glass studying the shore.

Suddenly she turned and beckoned excitedly to Frank.

"Come quick!" she said, "there are people on that cliff yonder!"

Frank saw that this was true.

Upon a cliff or the brow of an eminence, the base of which was washed by the sea, there were a few rude habitations.

Instantly the young inventor cried:

"Turn her inshore, Barney. Run up as near as you can."

"All roight, sor!" cried the Celt cheerily.

The Sea Crab ran in close to the shore and then anchored. Frank got out a small boat.

Already people from the encampment had come down to the shore to welcome the newcomers.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE SUNKEN FOREST.

FRANK saw that they were white men, and possibly Americans. So he did not hesitate to hail them.

"Ahoy the shore!" he shouted.

"Ahoy the ship!" came back the hail.

"What camp is that?"

"Camp Preservation," was the reply, "and we are survivors of the big land sink!"

"Then you are the people I am looking for!" cried Frank. "I will come ashore!"

"All right!"

The young inventor sprang into the boat with the doctor and Barney. They rowed for the shore.

The little boat passed safely through the breakers and ran up onto the beach.

Then they leaped out and met the castaway party face to face.

"My name is Carl Watkins," said the spokesman of the party. "I am from America."

"Good!" cried Frank, "then we are countrymen. My name is Frank Reade, Jr., and that craft out there is my submarine boat."

"A submarine boat?"

"Yes."

"Has that problem been solved?"

"It has."

"That is wonderful," said Watkins, with earnestness. "And I daresay the news of this terrible affair has drawn you to this part of the world."

"It has," replied Frank, "but exploration was not my only motive."

"Ah!"

"Our chief errand is to learn the fate of Walter Harding, whose father owned large interests in the sunken forest."

"Walter Harding!" exclaimed Watkins, with a sad intonation.

"Ah, I fear you will hear bad news."

"Is—is he a victim?"

"Walter was in the heart of the forest with a gang of rubber men," said Watkins. "We have heard nothing of him since. He could not possibly have escaped."

Frank and the doctor exchanged glances.

"How did you escape?" asked the young inventor.

"Oh, we were upon that part of the sink which went down slowly. We were enabled to build a raft and launch it. Upon it we drifted here and made a safe landing. The spot we left, however, is now fathoms deep in the sea."

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank. "Why could not young Harding have escaped in the same manner?"

Watkins shook his head.

"I hardly believe it possible," he said slowly, "that part of the forest went down in a second of time."

Frank turned to the doctor.

"It will be no pleasant matter to break the truth to Meta," he said.

"That is true," said the doctor, "but we can certainly do no more."

"Absolutely nothing. By the way, Mr. Watkins, what are your circumstances? Are you all well supplied with provisions?"

"Amplly, sir!" replied Watkins. "We can ask for no more. We are waiting for a couple of black guides, to start at once for May-nough, a town on the coast, perhaps one hundred miles below here. We shall there join a new colony just striking into the heart of Africa."

"Good! I wish you success."

"Thank you."

"Then there is nothing I can do to aid or benefit you?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then I wish you success and a hearty farewell."

"Farewell to you!"

Back to the boat the voyagers rowed. It was Frank's unpleasant duty to break the truth to Meta.

To his surprise the young girl was unmoved, and simply said:

"Then if I cannot have him alive I must find his body."

"That may be a difficult thing to do under the sea," said Frank; "however, we will try it."

"I wish you would. God will bless you for being so kind to me."

Frank bowed and went into the pilot house.

The Sea Crab ran out to sea four or five miles. Then Frank sent her beneath the surface.

Down she sank.

Allen pressed to the observation windows, anxious to see the bottom. Suddenly Barney cried:

"Begorra, there it is! Shure I kin see a moighty lot av big trees." This was true.

Beneath them was the sunken forest. There were the huge mahogany and eucalyptus. The foliage was yet dense and green.

Down sank the boat.

Frank saw an opening in the foliage and let the boat sink down through this.

Down it went and now the green carpet was seen below. The Sea Crab rested upon it and beneath the mighty arches of the sunken forest.

With sensations difficult to describe, the voyagers realized this. The searchlight's rays went quivering through the dark recesses.

All manner of fish and deep sea creatures swarmed where once human beings had trod, wild beasts had roamed, and the sunlight of Heaven had played hide-and-seek in the dense foliage.

It was a stupendous thing to think of, but instinctively all thought of the fate of those who had been in the forest at the time of the great convulsion.

"It will be impossible to find Harding's body," said Vaneyke to Frank. "I doubt if anybody could now be found in this forest, after all this opportunity given fish and sea monsters to devour them."

"That is true," agreed Frank, "but I have not the heart to tell that young girl such a thing."

"Of course not."

"We can look for the body just the same."

"Yes."

The Sea Crab was sent forward at a moderate pace through the forest arches.

Upon all sides a watch was kept for some sign of human being or habitation.

Suddenly Barney clutched Frank's arm.

"Wud yez look there, sor!" he cried.

Frank looked in the direction indicated. What he saw gave him a peculiar thrill.

There among the trees was a hut made of bark, boughs, and a network of vines. It was such a habitation as the rubber men used.

"That is certainly a human habitation," Frank declared. "Stop the boat—we must examine it."

Frank knew it was possible that the body of Walter Harding might be found in just such a place. He was decided to explore the hut.

The boat was stopped, and rested on the bed of the sea. Then the diving suits were brought out.

Meta was pale but calm, and stood by the observation window watching the hut.

Frank and Barney left the boat to visit the hut. The doctor did not accompany them this time, for some unknown reason.

Quickly the two divers made their way to the hut. Frank forced the door in.

The result was thrilling.

Instantly from the cabin a hideous apparition floated. It was the stiffened and bloated body of a man.

The current of water brought the body straight toward Barney. The Celt gave one terrified glance at the object of horror and then let out a yell which, however, could not be heard by any but himself and started pell-mell for the Sea Crab.

Of course, this was the worst thing that he could do. Naturally the suction drew the ghastly corpse after Barney, and the frightful spectacle of a dead man chasing one alive was witnessed.

The Celt reached the rail of the boat before he recovered himself. The body went sailing and gyrating over his head.

Then the Celt realized how foolish he had been. There was an element of superstition in his nature, but it was not strong enough to make him blind to reason.

He knew, of course, that a dead man could do him no possible harm, and recovering from the horror of the moment was quickly himself again.

The body now sank passively to the deck of the submarine boat. By this time Frank had reached the spot, and placing his helmet close to Barney's, laughingly cried:

"Did you think the Old Nick was after you, Barney?"

"Begorra I did that," declared the Celt, sheepishly; "I was niver more frightened in me loife!"

Frank climbed over the rail and approached the body. It essayed to float away from him.

But he caught it and held it firmly. Then he studied the bloated features.

But it was easy to see that the dead man was not Walter Harding. He was a very much older man.

Satisfied of this, Frank let the corpse float away in a current, and it vanished among the trees of the Sunken Forest.

Of course, the three occupants of the Sea Crab's cabin had seen all this, and Meta's eyes were dilated with horror.

But she drew a breath of relief when she learned that the body was not that of her lover. Frank and Barney now returned to the hut.

The door being open now, Frank entered. It was dark in the place but his helmet lamp lit it up well.

The hut had evidently been the abode of quite a party of the rubber men. It contained a number of bunks, a table, some chairs and a few tools such as the forest men used.

The single occupant of the cabin had evidently been instantly overcome by the tidal wave and was drowned like a rat in a trap.

There seemed to be nothing here to give a clue to the fate of Harding, save a journal or note book which lay upon the table. Frank had not time to examine its contents but put it in his pocket.

He thought now of returning to the submarine boat and turned to announce this intention to Barney. He experienced a startled shock, for the Celt had in some sudden and unaccountable manner disappeared. What did it mean?

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUNKEN CITY.

FRANK could take his oath that the Celt had but a moment before been standing at his very shoulder.

But he was not there now.

The young inventor stepped to the door of the hut. His first thought was that Barney might have started to return to the Sea Crab.

But he was not in sight neither in nor out of the hut. Astounded, Frank was for a moment at a loss what to do.

"That is very queer!" he muttered. "Where can have happened to him? where has he gone?"

He proceeded to make a search of the vicinity, even venturing into the dense forest a short ways. But not a trace of the Celt could be found.

However, Frank would not accept any supposition that harm had come to him.

"He will turn up yet all right," he assured himself; "he has taken a little tour of investigation on his own account."

Feeling sure of this Frank decided to return to the boat.

He had in his possession the note book found in the hut. Possibly it might contain memoranda which would clear the mystery of Walter Harding's fate.

So he made his way back to the Sea Crab. As he entered the cabin Dr. Vaneyke cried:

"Where is Barney?"

"I don't know," replied Frank. "He took sudden leave of me while in the hut. I think he will turn up all right enough in due time."

Then he produced the water-soaked note book, and placing it on the table, carefully turned the soaked leaves.

The action of the water had not as yet obliterated the ink marks or writing, and Frank was able to read its contents.

It proved to be a journal and account book kept by Jason Fuller, overseer of the Harding company.

The main part of its contents were various transactions in figures with the accounts of the native employees. But in the latter part of the book was an entry which at once threw a great light upon matters.

Thus the entry read:

"Yesterday we were honored with a visit from Mr. Walter Harding of the firm. He is a very pleasant young man, and has gone on to the western part of the forest to see the mahogany cutters. He will stop here again upon his return."

As Frank read this entry, for a moment silence reigned. Then the men looked up, and were amazed at the light in Meta's eyes.

The young girl had become wholly transformed.

"Her pale cheeks were flushed, her eyes shone like stars, and she said in a tense voice:

"I knew it! My dream will certainly come true. Walter was on his way to the western forest. That was in the direction of safety."

"But he may have been overtaken," ventured Frank.

"You forget that all the survivors were in that part of the forest. Did not the survivors we saw state that the land in that section settled slowly, giving them a chance to escape?"

"They did."

"Why then is it not logical that Walter should have fared as well?"

It was evident that she was much excited. Frank arose and took her burning hand.

"My dear girl," he said, "it is my earnest prayer that Walter Harding has escaped. But do not become over confident, and trust in Heaven's mercy."

"I understand you," said Meta with a low bow. "Rest assured that I shall not give way to false hopes. Whatever comes, I shall leave all to my God."

"Well spoken," said Frank. "But where on earth is Barney?"

Anxiously the young inventor went to the observation window.

The Celt had not yet shown up. This was strange, and warranted a startling fear.

Frank watched the hut intently for a few moments and then exclaimed:

"Something is wrong! I must know what it is!"

So he entered the vestibule again to leave the boat. Dr. Vaneyke came forward quickly, saying:

"Wait, Frank, I want to go with you."

"Very well!" agreed the young inventor. "You must make haste!"

The doctor lost no time in donning a helmet and then he and Frank were soon in the sea.

To the hut they made their way quickly. Entering it they saw at once that it was empty.

Barney was not there.

But Frank saw now what he had not seen before, and this was a small aperture which seemed to lead into another room.

In an instant the thought occurred to Frank that possibly the Celt had entered this place and something might have befallen him there.

So he instantly pressed forward to the aperture.

It was just large enough to admit the body of a man. Frank put head and shoulders through and looked about him.

It was a startling sight which met his gaze.

A heavy section of the roof had fallen; in fact, the whole heavy trunk of a tree, and there beneath it lay the motionless form of a man.

It was Barney.

It required but a glance for Frank to see how it all happened. It needed but a moment for him to act.

He sprang into the inner room, and applied his strength to the tree trunk. It lay across Barney's hips.

What the pressure was, and whether bones were broken or not, Frank could not tell.

It was enough for him to know that the Celt must have instant help. He applied all his strength to the tree trunk, but could not lift it.

"And to think that I have suffered him to lie here all this time without assistance," he muttered, reproachfully; "it is terrible!"

Dr. Vaneyke was close behind Frank. He also took in the situation at a glance, and was quick to act.

He sprang to the young inventor's assistance. With their united strength the tree was lifted a trifle.

To the ineffable joy of both Barney moved.

He slowly and painfully crawled out from under the tree. Then letting their heavy burden drop, the other two divers fell down and fairly embraced the Celt with joy, while Frank placed his helmet close to Barney's and shouted:

"Are you all right, Barney?"

"Be jabers, I'm not so aisy kilt," replied the plucky Celt. "I'm a bit lame in the legs, but shure I'm worth two dead min yet."

"Good for you!" cried Frank, joyfully. "Now let us help you back to the boat."

Frank and the doctor with some effort succeeded in getting the Celt upon his feet once more. Then supporting him they returned aboard the Sea Crab.

Barney's injury, however, proved to be nothing permanent, and in a few hours he was quite himself again.

But it had been a close call for him. Pinned down as he had been by the heavy tree, he had been utterly unable to help himself.

Frank now sent the Sea Crab forward through the arches of the forest.

He knew that Meta was desirous of continuing the search for Walter Harding along the coast. But now that they were in the sunken forest, Frank reckoned it a good opportunity to first do a bit of exploring.

The native city of Mendoka was somewhere buried in this vicinity. This had been peopled by several thousand of the Mozambique natives.

But Mendoka was also a trading post, and many Americans had found quarters there. Frank was desirous of exploring this place.

So the Sea Crab threaded its way through the forest.

It was a curious scene spread upon every hand.

There were the trees and verdure as fresh as though far above the surface. Through their branches troops of monkeys had gamboled, colonies of birds had nested, and beasts of prey had lurked beneath them.

But all was now silence where once had been the busy hum of life.

The devouring sea had obliterated all the living creatures which depended upon air for subsistence. But it had supplanted these with finny denizens of all shapes and colors.

The searchlight was kept busy penetrating the dark recesses in front. The forest seemed to grow denser as they proceeded.

Suddenly Pomp, who was doing a turn at the keyboard, cried:

"Golly, Marse Frank, I done fink we are comin' somewhar, sah!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Frank, going to the pilot house window. "What is it? On my word, we have reached the city of Mendoka at last."

A glance down the pathway made by the searchlight showed a wonderful scene.

There was a high stockade of poles and reeds after the fashion of all native towns, and beyond the conical thatched roofs of the native dwellings.

All showed up as natural as life, but there was no warder at the gate—no armed guard with keen assagais at the stockade.

But right in the gateway lay a nondescript heap of human forms. They were in every imaginable position, just as they had been stricken down by the grim death angel.

The voyagers gazed upon the scene with varied emotions.

"Great Apollo!" exclaimed Vaneyke with a shiver, "the terrible fate which overtook Pompeii could not have been worse than this."

"You are right," agreed Frank. "It is a dreadful scene. These people were doubtless trying to flee from the onrushing waters."

"Yes, but they were overtaken and drowned."

"Only think of the hundreds beyond the gates, who were stricken down in all positions."

It was indeed a ghastly reflection. But the submarine boat sailed over the gate and along the main street of the town.

The scene thus revealed was of the most awful and heart rending description

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IRONWOOD TREE.

BUT few people could have escaped alive from the doomed city of Mendoka.

This was certain.

Such as had, doubtless were carried away upon the crest of the tidal wave only to be drowned later.

The streets, the doorways and the windows of the huts were occupied with dead bodies of the poor victims.

It was evident that the descent of Death was as unexpected and unlooked for as could well be imagined.

It was a sickening spectacle and Meta placed her hands before her eyes to shut it out.

None of the party cared to gaze upon it long, and Frank sailed the Sea Crab over the scene of horror as quickly as possible.

When it was left behind all felt better.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the doctor, "I never care to gaze upon such a scene as that again. It was harrowing."

"Indeed it was!" agreed Frank, "it is hardly likely that we shall ever see its equal again."

"Begorra it must have been a dreadful toime to the poor sows!" cried Barney. "Shure, they had moighty little toime to get ready fer purgatory."

"Golly! I done fink dey fought ob any fink at all!" cried Pomp; "don' believe dat dey had time fo' dat."

"It was dreadful," said Meta, shudderingly: "there was no chance for escape!"

The Sea Crab sailed on now over a level tract of open country. But before long the arches of the sunken forest again showed up before them.

Into them the submarine boat once more glided.

Beneath the overhanging treetops the boat sped on, the searchlight making a pathway of radiance ahead.

Frank was at the wheel when the doctor approached him.

"I suppose the young lady is very anxious to begin the search for young Harding is she not?" he asked.

"I daresay," said Frank.

"Then why not gratify her desire? I am satisfied. I have seen enough of the sunken forest."

"You are satisfied?"

"Yes. I can see that this wonderful phenomena was due to some inner convulsion of the earth's crust. I have seen all that I think necessary for the interests of science. Now let us defer to the young lady."

"It shall be as you say," said Frank, in acquiescence. "I really think it our first duty to learn the fate of Harding, if possible. Then perhaps we can return to a further exploration of the forest."

"Just so."

"Very well; I will acquaint her with this decision, if you say so."

"Just so."

Frank went at once to Meta and told her of this. She was overjoyed.

"I am sure we shall find him," she said. "My dream will surely come true."

"I trust that it may," declared Frank.

The submarine boat, at this moment, was in the deepest part of the Sunken Forest.

It was impossible to rise to the surface from here on account of the overhanging tree tops, so Frank was obliged to keep on under the forest arches, until a convenient spot was reached.

This led to an incident which came near resulting in a catastrophe.

The Sea Crab was sailing under the spreading high branches of an eucalyptus, when suddenly a wild cry broke from Barney.

"Shure, it's fallin' on us, Misther Frank!" he cried; "it's kilt we'll be!"

Then there was a shock, and for an instant it seemed as if the Sea Crab was going to pieces.

"Mercy on us!" cried Dr. Vaneyke; "what has happened?"

The submarine boat had come to a dead stop. Barney, in the pilot-house, had been hurled from his feet.

All rushed instinctively to the window and looked out.

The sight which they beheld, was not one calculated to increase their courage or hopes. The Sea Crab had been brought to an absolute standstill by the weight of a falling tree, which lay right across her bow.

The bowsprit was crushed, and one of the masts had gone by the board. It looked as if her hull had also suffered a crushing, and Frank looked to see the water rushing into the cabin.

But fortunately this was not the case.

The aluminum shell was badly bent in, but not perforated, and she was yet water proof. This was the salvation of the crew.

Had the hull been punctured they must have been drowned like rats in a trap.

But the situation, as it was, was serious enough.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Frank, "we will have no closer call than this! A little more and we could now be making our peace with Heaven!"

"You are right," agreed the doctor, "it was a narrow shave. But—"

"What?"

"The situation as it is, is bad enough. Can we free ourselves?"

"We must!" said Frank, grimly.

"As it is now we seem to be very securely pinned down."

"That is true, but we can cut away the tree."

"Of course! We ought to waste no time about it."

"We will not!"

Frank called Barney and Pomp, quickly saying:

"Get axes, both of you. Will you remain on board to guard the keyboard, doctor?"

"Certainly!" replied the savant.

Barney and Pomp hastened to obey the command.

In a very short time they were equipped in their diving-suits with axes and ready for duty.

Frank joined them, and the three divers left the cabin. In a few moments they were at the bow of the boat.

It could be seen that the tree lay right across the bow, but not with its full weight. Had this been the case the hull would have been crushed into a pulp.

The branches and limbs of the forest monarch had prevented the tree from falling fairly upon the ground. These partly upheld the trunk.

But yet the weight was sufficient to hold the boat firmly. Nor would any ordinary force remove it.

Frank saw this at a glance and he said, placing his helmet to Barney's:

"There's only one way, and that is to cut the tree in two."

"Shure that's so, sor!" declared the Celt, "but avin thin it's goin' to be moighty hard worruk to cut into that koin'd av wood."

With which the Celt raised his axe aloft and dealt the trunk a tremendous blow. The result was curious enough.

It was as if he had struck a rock.

The keen edge of the axe turned in an instant, and the bark of the tree only was shattered. Frank was utterly dumbfounded.

"For mercy's sakes," he declared, "what kind of wood is that?"

"Bejabers I'm afther thinkin' it's not wood at all, sor," declared the Celt, as he looked at the frayed blade of his ax.

"I am inclined to agree with you," said Frank. "Can it be lignum vitae?"

He lifted his own ax and dealt the tree a blow in the same spot. The bark flew and also a chip from the ax blade.

"On my word!" exclaimed the astonished young inventor. "Who ever saw the likes of that?"

Then he bent over the tree and examined it. He saw that it was of a species which he had never seen or heard of before.

The trunk was as solid as a rock and would plainly resist any ordinary blow of a steel blade. Frank saw that it was utterly useless to attack it with an ax.

What was to be done?

Pomp essayed to do some chopping. But he instantly ruined his ax.

The three astonished men exchanged glances.

Then they put their helmets together.

"It's no use," said Frank. "We can't make any impression on the tree with these tools."

"Begorra, yez are roight, sor," agreed Barney. "Shure I'm afther thinkin' it's iron an' not wood."

"It may be a species of iron-wood tree," said Frank. "I have heard of the existence of such a tree, but this is the first specimen I have ever seen."

"Golly!" exclaimed Pomp, "de doctor will jes' want a lily piece fo' a specimen fo' shuah!"

"You're right, Pomp," said Frank. "Well, the most important question is, how are we going to release the boat from this predicament?"

"Shure, sor, we kin blow up the blasted tree intoirely," cried Barney; "thry the dynamite, sor!"

"No," said Frank, "that would endanger the boat. But perhaps a saw would work. Pomp, will you go back to the cabin and bring up a whip saw, which is in the hold?"

"Yas, sah!"

Away went the darky, while Frank and Barney waited.

Pomp returned presently with the saw.

Then work was begun.

For several minutes Barney and Pomp on opposite sides of the tree trunks tried to make the saw cut but in vain.

It seemed to make no impression whatever upon the hard substance of the tree trunk.

The teeth bent and broke like cheese, and in a few moments the saw was ruined.

The attempt was a failure.

Frank was aghast. Here was truly a predicament.

What was to be done?

How was the tree trunk to be removed? The affair had begun to assume already a very serious aspect.

It seemed as if it could yield to no ordinary means. Then Frank thought of Barney's suggestion of the use of dynamite.

But he feared to employ so deadly an agent, for much harm might be done the boat. The situation was indeed most serious.

CHAPTER IX.

RELEASED—THE STRANGE VESSEL.

THE young inventor was deeply puzzled. But he was not the one to yield to an obstacle.

He was bound to surmount it in some way.

He was not long in devising an expedient. His inventorial genius came now into play.

He did not return to the cabin, but said to his companions:

"Barney and Pomp, I want you to go back to the hold of the boat and bring me out some spades and picks for all of us."

The two servitors looked astonished but instantly obeyed.

In a few moments they returned with the required tools, and then Frank said:

"My plan is to dig away the sand under the bow of the boat. As she settles the weight of the tree trunk will be taken from her, for the limbs of the tree will prevent its sinking further."

In an instant Barney and Pomp saw the logic of this plan. The sands were light and easily scooped up, and it was not so great a task to contemplate.

"Begorra, Mither Frank!" cried Barney, "I'd niver have thought of that, sor!"

Frank laughed.

"Well, it seems the only way out of the difficulty. But I am with you, so let us to work."

"Golly! I'se wid yo', honey!" cried Pomp.

All three now set valiantly to work. From the observation window the doctor and Meta watched them.

The sand was thrown up in heaps around the keel of the Sea Crab.

It was slow work, but every shovelful counted, and gradually the boat settled in the cavity.

The trees' pressure became less and less. It was plain that Frank's plan was bound to succeed.

At this juncture the doctor came out with his helmet on to secure a specimen of the curious ironwood tree.

He examined it carefully from roots to top and found not a break in it.

It had fallen from its own weight and the loosening of its roots by the water. The branches, such as had broken, were snapped off like pipe stems.

The foliage was brittle and like shavings of steel. In fact, it was one of the most curious of growths that Dr. Vaneyke had ever seen upon the earth's surface.

"The trunk of this tree, transported to America, would be worth thousands of dollars as a curiosity," he declared, "I have never heard of one in existence like it."

"Nor I," agreed Frank; "but it would be impossible to transport it to America."

"I daresay. However, I shall secure all the specimens I can," and the savant did so.

Frank with Barney and Pomp had succeeded in making quite an excavation under the bow of the Sea Crab.

The young inventor only desisted when he saw that the hull of the boat was clear of the tree trunk. Then all went hastily on board.

It did not take long to back the Crab away from the cause of its temporary imprisonment. Then Frank went out on deck to see the extent of the damage.

It became necessary to cut away the shattered bowsprit and the foremast but this did not in any way affect the seaworthiness of the boat.

The dent in the hull was of minor importance, and otherwise the Sea Crab was all right.

This was a matter for mutual congratulation. The escape had indeed been a narrow one.

Once more the Sea Crab went on her way under the forest arches.

Frank was looking for an opportunity to get clear of the overhanging treetops, but the forest really seemed to grow denser all the while.

"Well, is there no end to it?" muttered the young inventor impatiently. "On my word, I believe we shall have to turn back."

"It seems strange that we do not come to a clearing," said the doctor with surprise. "We cannot keep forever wandering in this sunken forest."

The search-light's rays were constantly employed looking for a way out of the forest. But none appeared at once.

On and on for hours the boat sailed thus.

Then all waxed intensely weary, and remembered that it had been a long while since they had indulged in necessary sleep.

The doctor gave out entirely and retired to his bunk.

"Well," said Frank, finally, "we must answer to the demand of nature, which seems to be sleep. We certainly can go no further at present."

"Do not on my account, I beg of you," said Meta. "I am myself compelled to seek rest."

"Very well. Lower the boat, Barney, and let go the anchors. Here is a good place to lay to."

"All roight, sor."

So the submarine boat came to a stop, and the anchors were put out. Then the weary voyagers slept.

For fully twelve hours the Sea Crab lay at her moorings. Pomp kept sleepy watch in the pilot house half this time and Barney the other half.

Nothing befell the boat or crew in that period. It is needless to say that all were refreshed.

At the expiration of the twelve hours, however, Frank was astir and the boat was once again on her way.

Pomp prepared a delicious breakfast, after which the voyagers felt ready for anything.

And now to add to the good turn which affairs had taken, the search-light showed a clearing ahead.

"Good!" cried Frank. "Now we can soon reach the surface."

On sailed the Sea Crab until suddenly the forest terminated. The boat passed over a rocky bluff.

Far below were sands and huge boulders. Beyond was a forest of seaweed.

"Why," cried the doctor, "we have reached the limit of the sunken forest. This is the original shore."

"You are right," declared Frank, "this is the old coast line."

"Beyond any doubt; we have come a good ways under water."

"Yes, but now for the surface."

Frank touched the tank lever, up shot the boat.

Up and up she went rapidly until suddenly she cleft the surface and the light of day was about.

Far upon every hand as the eye could reach, stretched the smooth expanse of the Indian Ocean. Distant upon the horizon was a white sail.

The coast line could not be seen, but Frank turned the bow of the Sea Crab in its direction.

For a long time it ran rapidly to the westward; then Barney gave the loud cry:

"Land ho, sor!"

The coast was dimly in view; every moment it became plainer.

There remained nothing now for the voyagers to do but to search for Harding. To learn his fate was the prime object.

Whether he could succeed in this or not Frank had no means of knowing. He could only try.

It was the secret fear that all must come to naught. He really believed that young Harding was at the bottom of the sea.

But of course there yet remained the possibility that he had escaped the flood and like the survivors they had found on the cliffs, had succeeded in drifting ashore.

Soon the Sea Crab was again within hailing distance of the shore. They were not far from the stopping place of a short while before.

But the survivors, who at that time had a camp on the cliff, were not there now. They had probably set out for the small sea port some miles below, and beyond the line of the great sink.

Along the shore the boat slowly sailed.

Suddenly, as they approached a long headland, a moving white object was seen over the tree tops. It was a vessel's sail.

"A ship!" cried the doctor. "What can it be? Probably some trading vessel."

But before further comment could be made, the vessel sailed around the headland and came into full view.

Instantly Meta gave a short, quick gasp.

"That is the ship!" she cried; "that is the one!"

Frank turned in surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked; "have you seen it before?"

"Yes, yes!" she cried, excitedly; "in my dream!"

The other voyagers looked astonished. This, if true, was a strange coincidence. Would the dream come true?

The young girl was leaning eagerly over the rail, and exclaiming:

"Yes, yes, that is the ship, and he is aboard; I know he is. He is in need of help. Those are bad men, wicked villains, and he is in their power! Oh, God, help me to rescue him!"

So earnest and sincere were the young girl's emotions, that Frank was deeply impressed.

"There must be something in it," he said, to the doctor. "We must take a closer look at that ship."

"She certainly has a rakish look," said the savant.

"Yes!" agreed Frank, "she is beyond doubt a Malay, and those fellows are all a class of pirates you know. Ah, she is making for us!"

This was true.

The Malay vessel was laying over to the wind and driving down toward the Sea Crab.

Frank was not anxious to make too close an acquaintance with the villainous looking craft. He knew well the risk of this.

The Malay, in the presence of a superior power, is a docile citizen. But when he holds the superior power—then look out for him.

The submarine boat was doubtless taken by the Malays for a small coasting yacht, and consequently easy prey.

Down the rakish vessel swooped, but Frank was not the one to be taken off his guard by any means.

CHAPTER X.

THE MALAYS.

INSTANTLY Frank pressed the motor lever and the Sea Crab ran off at right angles with the greatest of ease. The Malay had to jibe about.

When she did this Frank again veered at right angles.

The Malay might as well have tried to catch an elusive will-o'-the-wisp. The little electric boat could dodge her with the greatest of ease.

All the while Frank was studying his opponent closely.

After some time of maneuvering thus the Malay vessel lay to and a flag was run up which evidently signified a desire for a parley.

"They want to talk with us," said the doctor. "Will you favor them, Frank?"

"Well, yes!" agreed the young inventor. "I can see no harm in that. Let us see what they have to say."

So he allowed the Sea Crab to lay at a respectable distance off the Malay's bows. He ran up an answering flag to the maintop of the Crab.

Then the Malays answered in an unexpected manner.

A boat put out from the schooner and rowed toward the submarine boat. It held six occupants.

Four of these were oarsmen. The fifth was a helmsman, and the sixth evidently a spokesman, for he stood in the bow.

Frank stepped out on the deck as the boat came up. All in the Sea Crab's party thought they had never seen so villainous a set of rogues as these Malays.

They were dressed in their native garb, with huge hoops of gold in their ears. They were armed to the teeth.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the doctor. "I would not care to meet those fellows in a lonely spot after dark."

"Nor I," agreed Frank. "Truly they are a hard looking crowd."

The boat came up to within easy speaking distance.

Then the dark skinned wretch in the bow cried in his native tongue:

"Who are you?"

Frank made a sign that he did not understand, and then the fellow, who seemed to be something of a linguist, reiterated his question in Portuguese.

This was more comprehensive to Frank, and he replied:

"We are Americans. Who are you?"

"Honest fishermen!" was the reply.

"You look like it."

"What say?" came back quickly.

"I say that you look like fishermen of dead men's purses," replied Frank, with asperity. "Do all fishermen carry knives and pistols?"

"Ah, we fear pirates," was the reply. "We must look out for them!"

"That is just our position," replied Frank, coolly. "But I want to ask you a question. Have you seen anything of a survivor of the tidal wave, a young man of our nationality?"

"I am sure these are the men whom I saw in my dream," said Meta, intensely. "Walter is in their power, be sure of it."

"We will certainly ascertain if he is," said Frank, "and if your surmise is correct he shall be rescued."

"God help us to save him from these wretches," breathed the young girl, earnestly.

The question put by Frank seemed to startle and somewhat disconcert the Malays.

For a moment they made no answer to Frank's query. They seemed to exchange comments, and when the reply did come it was equivocal.

"We do not understand you. If you will let us come aboard we will talk with you."

Frank took a moment to think. He, however, had no idea of acceding to this request.

He divined the purpose of the rascals, which was simply to get a view of the interior of the vessel and the size of its crew.

"If I should allow them to come aboard," he said, "I believe I would put every one of the dogs in irons. I would like to know for a fact if Walter Harding is aboard their boat."

"Oh, I am sure he is!" cried Meta, earnestly.

Then a startling thing occurred.

A loud commotion was heard on board the Malay vessel. The crack of fire-arms rose upon the air.

Instantly every eye was upon the pirate ship. The Malays in the boat turned as well.

It was a thrilling sight which all beheld.

Out upon the vessel's bowsprit there ran a half-naked form. Even at that distance it could be seen that he was a white man.

The crack of the fire-arms could plainly be heard as the Malay crew fired at him.

Whether he was struck by any of the bullets or not, it was not easy to guess. But the next moment he had leaped into the sea.

A wild scream of terror burst from Meta's lips:

"Oh, it is Walter!" she cried. "Save him! Save him! they will kill him."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the doctor, "I believe she is right, Frank."

Frank said not a word but sprang to the key board. In a moment the submarine boat was on its way to the spot where the escaped prisoner was struggling in the water.

Barney and Pomp rushed to get their Winchesters.

"Begorra, we'll give the black devils a surprise," cried the Celt.

"Golly! dat we will," rejoined Pomp.

But startling incidents now came piling on. The Malay small boat turned and was also making for the prisoner in the water.

Meta was frantic and ran up and down the deck wringing her hands wildly.

"Oh, save him, save him!" she screamed.

Frank was putting on all speed. He knew the necessity of quick action.

The thwarts of the Malay vessel were lined with men firing at the swimming man, but for some miraculous reason they could not hit him.

This was fortunate, indeed. Frank's purpose was to put the Sea Crab between him and their fire, then he could pick the swimmer up easily.

But an unforeseen thing at that moment occurred.

The young inventor thus far had been unaware of the existence of anything but small arms aboard the schooner.

Now, however, he was startled to see the muzzle of a cannon thrust over the vessel. It was a miserable affair, but yet might do much harm at that range.

And before he could make action to dodge a shot it came. Fire leaped from the muzzle of the gun.

The next moment Frank was hurled from the pilot-house down into the cabin.

There was an awful rending crash. A great gaping hole was torn in the pilot-house, and the key board was dashed to pieces.

The cannon ball had passed clear through, and spent itself in the sea. Words cannot describe the effect of this catastrophe upon all.

The boat was running at full speed and was almost instantly out of range. Frank quickly bounded into the pilot house again but it was to be rewarded with a dismaying fact.

The keyboard was wrecked. The engines were running at full speed. The boat would be miles out to sea before the screw could be checked.

While the unfortunate prisoner struggling in the water seemed now wholly at the mercy of the Malays.

Meta did not faint. But cold and white with horror, she clung to the rail praying for her lover's life.

And while Frank and Barney were trying to find the tangled electric wires by which only the machinery could be stopped, Doctor Vaneyke was watching with intensity the escaping man's efforts for life and liberty.

He was now trying madly to reach the shore.

Every huge ingoing wave helped to hurl him nearer. But the Malay small boat was gaining upon him.

If it should overtake him his life would doubtless be the forfeit.

And every moment those who could have given him aid were being carried further and further out to sea.

Nearer the shore the swimming man was carried.

Meta and the doctor were intent upon watching him. Suddenly the savant gave a great cry.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, "he has made it all right."

"Heaven be praised!" murmured Meta, fervently.

It was true that the fugitive had reached the shore. He was seen to stagger out of the surf and run quickly up the face of the cliff.

One moment he was visible at the summit and then he vanished into the dense forest. For the moment he seemed safe.

But his escape seemed by no means a certain thing, for the foe were hot after him.

The Malays drove their boat ashore and climbed the cliff in pursuit. This was all that could be seen.

"God help him to elude them," cried the doctor, fervently, and Meta said, softly, "Amen!"

Meanwhile, Frank and Barney and Pomp had been lively at work on the tangled wires of the key board. There was need of haste.

The damage done by the cannon ball was quite serious.

It was certain that efficient repairs could not be made save by taking the boat home to the Readestown shops. This was a dampening realization.

For the boat could certainly not go beneath the surface again until the gap in her pilot-house wall should be closed.

However, Barney and Frank finally succeeded in making new connections with the tangled wires, and the machinery was stopped.

A temporary key board was arranged and then the Sea Crab, no longer a submarine boat, turned in her course to go back to the scene of trouble.

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE RESCUE.

RAPIDLY the Sea Crab sped on the return course.

As she neared the Malay vessel an astounding discovery was made.

The pirate vessel was badly listed to starboard, and she seemed to be unable to answer to her filling sails.

The truth burst upon Frank in an instant.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "We will beat them now!"

"What?" interrogated the doctor.

"Don't you see? She is on a reef."

"On a reef!" cried the savant. "You are right, Frank. That is surely a bad show for her."

"Well, I should say so. All I fear is that confounded cannon of hers."

"Will you attempt to fight her?"

"By no means. She is well disposed of. My purpose now is to go ashore at once and pursue those rascals who are after Harding."

"Oh, Heaven will help you!" cried Meta. "Do go—you will succeed!"

"We will try!" said Frank, resolutely. "Make for that point of land yonder, Barney!"

"All roight, sor!"

The submarine voyagers had now nothing apparently to fear from the pirates.

The Sea Crab was quickly off the point of land indicated by Frank, and then the young inventor quickly named his plans.

"Barney and Pomp, you are to go ashore with me!" he said.

"Doctor, I will leave the boat and Miss Benton in your care!"

"They will be safe!" said the doctor, gallantly.

Very quickly a boat was launched and the three rescuers entered it.

They were armed to the teeth, and quickly pulled ashore. Frank took one look at the Malay vessel.

He saw that it had not changed its position, and exclaimed exultantly:

"The sea is coming up, and will very soon dispose of that evil craft. Come on, boys; there is work before us now!"

"Golly, I'se wif yo', Marse Frank!" cried Pomp.

"Begorra, the same here!" cried Barney, leaping out into the surf.

They quickly drew the boat up out of the way of the rolling breakers. Then they started up the cliff.

They followed the footsteps of the Malays as far as the edge of the forest. Here they were lost.

Frank hesitated a moment.

It was not easy now to tell just what course to take.

Of course it was all guess work. But to lose time was fatal, so he plunged into the forest.

Barney and Pomp followed him. Through the dense undergrowth they forced their way for a time.

Then Frank paused.

"It is not going to be easy to overtake them in this way," he declared. "Listen for some sounds to guide us."

"Shure, sor, I heard one then," cried Barney.

"You did?"

"Yis, sor!"

"Where?" asked Frank, excitedly.

Barney pointed westward. Then he fell upon his face and placed his ear to the ground.

"Whist, sor!" he cried. "Shure I kin hear thim again, sor!"

Frank also bent down and listened. Faintly to his ears came the distant sound of voices.

He had no doubt but that it was the Malay pursuers. The confirmation came in the shape of a distant pistol shot.

"Begorra, maybe they have shot him, sor!" cried Barney, excitedly.

"No, no!" cried Frank. "We will not believe that. Follow me!"

On into the forest they now ran at full speed.

And every moment the sound of the voices became near. Finally the trees cleared and they came out into an open space.

"Ah!" cried Frank, drawing back the hammer of his rifle, "there are the wretches."

With which he drew sudden quick aim and pulled the trigger. His aim was correct.

A distant yell of pain was heard, and the young inventor said, grimly:

"One of the murderers has expiated his crimes!"

"Begorra, give me a soight at thim!" cried Barney, excitedly.

But he and Pomp could get no sight at the Malays. They had disappeared in the undergrowth.

Frank now knew that a crisis was at hand.

All depended upon sharp work in the bush now. He was satisfied perfectly well of one thing.

This was that the Malays had not as yet captured the fugitive. If he was still at large he must know from this shot that succor was near and ought to be guided thereby.

But it was now in order to look out for the Malays.

They were sharp bush fighters as Frank knew, for he had once spent a year in the isles of Malaysia.

"We must not let them get the start of us!" he whispered. "Neither will it be safe to travel together. We must separate."

"Shure, sor, I'm wid yez," said Barney.

"All right. You go to the left, Barney and Pomp to the right. I will go directly ahead. Our signal will be the cry of the night-hawk. Remember this will be like stalking Indians in the wild west."

The two servitors needed no further bidding.

They had spent a season with Frank in the West years before, and knew well what he meant.

This experience was of great benefit to all, pitted against the Malays as they now were.

The copper skinned natives of the Orient were stealthy and wary to an intense degree. Frank knew well what he had to contend with.

The killing of one of their number by a foe from behind, had materially changed the tactics of the Malays.

They at once turned their attention to this new adversary and for the time Harding was rid of his pursuers.

Frank was in the most perilous position, as he had to advance straight toward the foe, while Barney and Pomp were enabled to make a detour.

However, the young inventor threw himself flat upon his face and wormed his way through the dense growth like a snake.

In this manner he kept on for some distance.

And all the while he was on the lookout for the foe. At sight of one he was ready to shoot.

But the Malays seemed to have suddenly melted away into nothingness. The most eternal of silence reigned in the forest glade.

But Frank kept on in his insidious manner, and soon was rewarded in his efforts. Directly at right angles he saw one of the foe crouched at the foot of a tree.

The fellow's back was toward him. It was an excellent chance to rid the earth of one of the monsters.

But just as the young inventor was about to lift his rifle he paused. His very being was froze with awful horror.

There, not two yards from his elbow, was one of the deadliest foes of that wild region.

Coiled up in a horrible slimy heap, was a monstrous African puff-adder, more deadly poisonous than the cobra or the rattlesnake.

Its hideous head was erect, its malevolent eyes were blazing with fury. Frank saw that he was almost certain to be struck.

There was but a brief second of time in which to make up his mind. What should he do?

If he fired at the Malay, the serpent would strike. It would be selling his life for another.

If again he fired at the snake to save his life, why would not the jeopardy be the same? His position would be revealed to the Malays.

Never was human being placed in a more dreadful or uncertain position. He was wholly at a loss to know what to do.

And every moment was fraught with deadly import. It would not do to waste time.

Frank's mind was half made up to destroy the serpent. He was about to turn his rifle upon the creature when a startling thing occurred.

Out of the underbrush there shot a long, bare white arm. In the muscular hand was a powerful club.

Quick as a stroke of a Vulcan that club descended upon the back of the puff adder. There was a tremendous hiss, and the reptile writhed in a harmless, helpless heap.

Its vertebrae was undoubtedly broken by that sudden powerful, swift blow. All was silent and effective too.

Then Frank saw a white face appear in the ferns. It was that of a youth, handsome but pale.

"Sh!" he whispered. "It is you who are trying to save me. I am Walter Harding. Did you not come from the small yacht in the bay?"

"I did," replied Frank. "And we have come all the way from America to rescue you."

"From America?" whispered the astonished youth. "Oh, you heard of the land sink? My father sent you?"

"No," replied Frank, "the girl you love——"

"Meta?"

"Yes, she is aboard the Sea Crab now. She came to find you dead or alive. Thank Heaven you are alive!"

The young fellow seemed overcome with emotion.

"God bless her," he exclaimed, "that is just like her heroic little self. And you, sir—your kindness shall be repaid if we live to get out of this place."

"We are in danger most deadly," said Frank.

"Yes, these Malays are a bad lot. I escaped before the tidal wave by getting afloat on a small raft. But these wretches picked me up as I was drifting about and have held me for a ransom."

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank, "it is fortunate for you that you were not at Mendoka."

"Mercy! Was the city buried?"

"Fathoms deep, and all the inhabitants are dead at the bottom of the sea."

"That is dreadful! The people of Mendoka were worthy people. But—sh! they have heard us!"

The Malay at the foot of the tree must have heard their sibilant whispering, for he turned like a flash. But it was his death knell.

Frank knew the importance of quick action.

Like a flash he acted.

Up went the rifle to his shoulder. The rifle spoke sharply. Pierced to the vitals the wretch threw up his arms and fell over backwards.

"Quick!" gasped Walter, "there is no time to lose!"

He dragged Frank after him through the undergrowth. But at that moment another rifle shot was heard.

"Bad cess to yez!" cried a hearty, Irish voice. "Shure, yez haven't the good grit to sthand yez ground, but yez must run away like cowards."

Then Frank and Walter saw the three remaining Malays running for their lives into the forest. The battle in the bush was over.

The Malays were certainly defeated.

Quickly our friends gathered in the verge of the forest, and Frank said:

"Well, what shall we do now? Ought we not to return at once to the Crab?"

"I'm of that moind, sor," cried Barney, "an' the sooner the better, sor."

"I believe it is the proper course," said Walter. "Certainly I shall be glad to meet the girl who thought enough of me to come into this far part of the world to save my life."

"You ought to appreciate her spirit," said Frank.

"And I do," replied Walter. "How much I can never fully convey to you."

So the party set out for the shore. It did not take them long to burst through the small strip of forest and reach it.

But as they came out upon the cliff and looked down upon the waters of the bay the scene that met their gaze was one for which they were altogether unprepared.

CHAPTER XII.

WHICH IS THE END.

LEFT aboard the submarine boat, Dr. Vaneyke and Meta watched the three rescuers as they scaled the cliff and vanished from sight.

Meta was in a state of much mental excitement.

"Oh, I am sure they will save him!" she kept saying earnestly; "fortune will favor them."

"Let us hope so," said the doctor encouragingly. "He is a brave fellow anyway. He will not give up without a struggle. What a noble effort he made to reach the shore!"

"He will not be easily taken!" she said with flashing eyes.

"Indeed, no!" declared the doctor. "But," with a sudden thought, "what if——"

"What?" she asked sharply, turning upon him.

"Well, that is," stammered the doctor, "it is not likely, you know, but what if it was not really Mr. Harding. You know we have not got a close look at him."

"You forget," she said with asperity, "it could be nobody else. Has not all this happened in accordance with my dream? And did not my dream tell me that I was to find Walter here?"

The good doctor was dumfounded.

"Well," he said stupidly. "Dreams are wonderful things. They do sometimes come true I have heard. Yet—really I beg your pardon, Miss Benton, I mean well, but do not base your hopes upon the—the supposition you know—the shock of disappointment. I am an old medical man and I can tell you it would not be good for your system."

"I understand you," she said mildly. "And I thank you just the same. But your fears are all unwarranted. You may be sure it is Walter."

"Well I hope so," said the doctor earnestly. "And that they will succeed in rescuing him. Great Cicero! What is that?"

The savant gave a mighty start. Both gazed upon a spectacle at that moment which filled them with consternation.

When Frank had started for the shore the pirate vessel was apparently safely stuck upon a reef. Certainly the young inventor had never reckoned upon her getting afloat again.

But the spectacle which the two guardians of the Sea Crab witnessed, was the pirate ship trimming her sails and making a direct course for them.

She had in some miraculous manner got off the reef and was afloat once more.

What was more, she intended to make another attack upon the submarine boat.

For a moment Dr. Vaneyke was aghast.

"Great Hannibal, help us!" he gasped. "What can we do, sis? She is bound to send us to the bottom if she can get within range!"

"There is only one thing to do," said Meta, coolly.

"What?"

"We must put out to sea and give her the slip. We can return later for the rest of our people."

"Well," said Dr. Vaneyke, "that would be capital if only——"

"What?"

"I knew how to put the boat in motion. I did understand the key board quite well. But since that was smashed by the cannon ball, I don't believe I would understand the machinery."

"Well, we must try it!" cried Meta excitedly. "Come with me—let us see what we can do!"

"Of course we'll try it."

Into the pilot house they rushed. The labyrinthine network of wires was, however, to them a Chinese puzzle.

"Great Joppa!" declared the doctor, "we never can do anything with them at all!"

"We must try," said Meta.

And she began to experiment. The result was that instead of making the motor connections she opened the tank valve.

The boat began to sink.

"Stop! we shall be drowned!" cried Vaneyke wildly.

Meta quickly closed the valves and saved the day. But every moment the Malay vessel was drawing down upon them.

"Heaven help us!" groaned the young girl. "We are lost if we fall into their hands. What shall we do?"

"We must not fall into their hands!" cried the doctor, "there is one way out of the dilemma."

"What is it?"

"We must abandon the Sea Crab."

"What? leave the boat to them?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, but Frank Reade, Jr., would never forgive us."

"Better lose the boat than fall into their clutches also. There is no other course. There is a boat in the hold. I will launch it and we will make a run for the shore!"

Meta gave a cry of horror.

Boom!

Crash—ash!

A cannon ball struck the hull of the Sea Crab. It tore a great gaping hole in her side.

Through this water began to pour. It at once settled the question as to what they should do.

The Sea Crab was bound to sink. There was no saving her now. It was a prime necessity to leave her.

The doctor hesitated no longer.

Down into the cabin he sprang. He quickly dropped the portable boat out onto the deck.

Another cannon ball passed into the hold of the Sea Crab. She was a doomed craft.

Never more would Frank Reade, Jr.'s, wonderful invention sail the surface or the deep sea. She was beyond repair, beyond salvation.

Her perpetual grave was to be the Indian Ocean. Dr. Vaneyke lost no time in launching the boat.

Meta stepped into it, and the doctor followed.

"Let me help you row," said the young girl, taking an oar. "I am used to boats."

Together they pulled away for the shore.

Baffled yells came from the deck of the Malay vessel. Shots were fired after them.

But the Malay guns were not of an improved make, and they could not hit the fugitives at that distance.

A boat put out from the Malay vessel to head them off.

But Meta and the doctor pulled heroically, and soon distanced their pursuers. It was a long way to the shore.

But as they drew near Meta chanced to glance over her shoulder and gave a startled cry.

"Why, look!" she cried. "They are waiting for us on the beach."

The doctor looked.

"Great Hannibal!" he exclaimed; "so they are! And there is your good friend safe and sound. Miss Benton, I congratulate you." Meta's face was crimson. But the light in her eyes was of heaven born joy.

Nearer the shore they drew.

And it was this scene which Frank and his companions had seen upon coming out of the African forest:

The Malay vessel in the offing afloat once more, the Sea Crab just going down, and the small boat pulling for the shore.

"My soul!" exclaimed Frank, "that is the end of the Crab. Whoever thought the ship would get off the reef?"

"Why didn't dey put out to sea fo' goodness sake?" asked Pomp, aghast.

"You forget," said Frank, "the keyboard was gone, and of course they could not tell how to start the engines. Well, it can't be helped."

"Be jabbers, it's a shame!" declared Barney.

"We ought to be thankful to think that human life has been spared!" said Frank. "The doctor and Meta might have lost their lives. That would have been a much worse catastrophe."

"Mr. Reader!" said Harding, wringing Frank's hand, "you shall be well paid for your boat. You gave it up to save me, and I'll make it right."

"Not a bit of it!" said Frank, carelessly. "I can build another and perhaps a better one. I don't care a fig now. Let it go!"

At this moment Dr. Vaneyke and Meta rowed through the surf. Barney and Pomp pulled their boat high up on the sands.

Then a glad scene followed.

Meta Benton and her true lover, Walter Harding met. The others reverently turned their heads from so sacred a scene.

It was certainly brave work upon the young girl's part. Walter Harding could well know the worth of the prize he had won.

It was certain that the Sea Crab was done for.

The baffled Malays did not attempt to come ashore. They hung off the coast for some while and then put out to sea.

A discussion was now held as to the proper course to pursue.

Their position was not one of the most flattering kind. They were cast away upon the shore of the African continent and some distance from any civilized town.

However, it was decided to travel slowly along the coast until the first settlement was reached. There they would try to get conveyance by ox team to the nearest seaport and thence find a sailing vessel which might be bound for Cape Town.

Thence they intended to sailed for America.

"I have nothing to stay in Africa for now," said Walter. "forest lands are at the bottom of the sea. However, we are poor but that we can begin anew somewhere else!"

"But you have promised me that you will not come to Africa again," said Meta.

"I will keep my promise," said Walter with a laugh. "America is field enough for me."

No mishap befell the party, and in due time they reached a small coast settlement. Here some friendly Portuguese furnished them with oxen, and they set out for the south.

For days they traveled on slowly through a wild region.

Then one day they came to a little Mozambique seaport. Here they found a coast schooner for Cape Town.

The voyage to Cape Town was made in due time. Then an English steamer was taken to Liverpool.

Thence they voyaged home by a New York steamer, and a happy party they were when America's shores burst upon their view.

In New York, Harding and Meta took leave of the others.

The parting was an affecting one, and Frank Reade, Jr., was overwhelmed with the gratitude of the two lovers.

Of course we will not mar the happy ending of this story by asserting that Meta and Walter did not marry. They did, and live happily in New York to-day.

The doctor went back to Washington with a great fund of knowledge regarding the deep sea. He will write a scientific book on the subject some day.

Frank Reade, Jr., went back to Readestown to begin work upon a new invention.

Barney and Pomp are there with him now. Perhaps we shall hear from them all again soon. With this happy announcement let us say adieu.

[THE END.]

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